

To whom it may concern,

I wanted to share my story with you to try to spare future pregnant mothers with babies diagnosed with Spina Bifida from the same mental anguish that I endured when I was sent to my high risk pregnancy doctor.

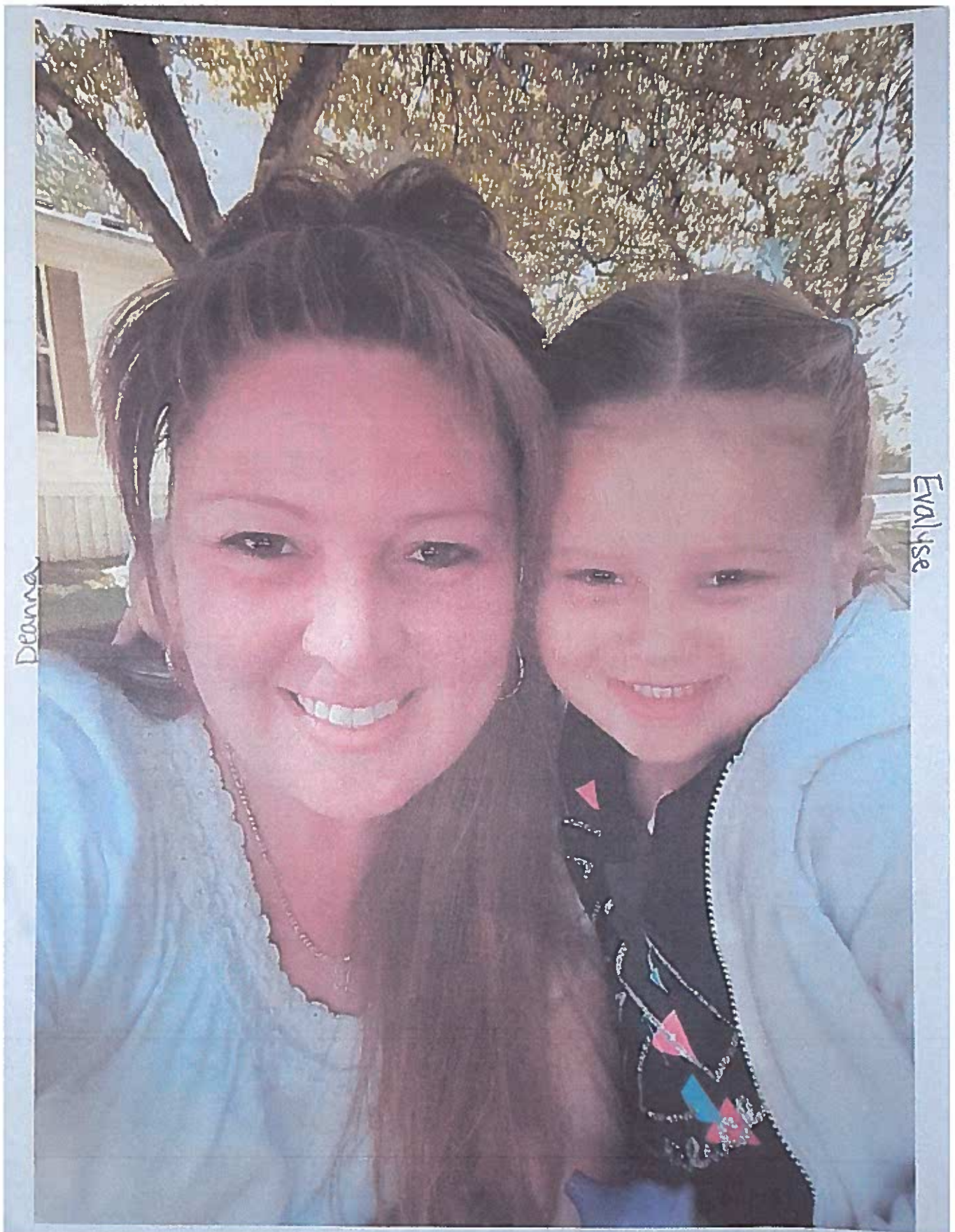
A routine ultrasound at my ob-gyn exposed that something was wrong with my unborn child. They sent me to get an amniocentesis for accurate diagnosis and also to a high risk pregnancy specialist. I'm not going to pretend that I remember word for word what my high risk pregnancy doctor said because that was five years ago but what I do remember is that he gave me no options except for one: abortion. I refused right away, in my mind that was not an option that I would even consider. I was poorly educated about my daughters' diagnosis that they had discovered through various ultrasounds but I wanted to know details of what she would be facing. I asked so many questions about the diagnosis but the only answers I received was to terminate. He said she would be brain damaged, a vegetable, will never be able to walk, and told me not to be selfish and think of what I would put her through and what a burden she would be to me and my family. On multiple occasions he even called her a water head because her ventricles were enlarged due to extra water from hydrocephalus. He offered detailed information for where I could terminate my child since they didn't do it at their Catholic hospital yet no mention of fetal surgery. I completely understand how severe Spina Bifida can be and I appreciate that the doctor didn't sugar coat anything but the families should also be supplied with other available options and especially more current and accurate information with evidence, health criteria, statistics, and support systems.

I will never forget how I felt the day I left that office with nothing but a pink folded piece of paper for a Spina Bifida "Brochure" and a broken heart that was being controlled by something bigger than myself. Even today it still brings me to tears and I strongly feel like this could be prevented.

Thank you for considering my letter as a form of my support for this bill. Future Spina Bifida mothers will thank you as well. My healthy, happy, brilliant four year old daughter that did have fetal surgery and walks perfectly fine thanks me for not following that particular doctors' orders.

Sincerely,

Deanna Luebbert



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